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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 42nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 21 July 2003, at 10 a.m.

President: Ms. RASI (Finland)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Ms. Rasi (Finland) Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (agenda item 7) (continued)

(a) REPORTS OF COORDINATION BODIES (continued) (E/2003/55; A/58/16)

(b) PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2004-2005 (continued) (A/58/6 and 16)

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(f) POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (E/2003/25-Suppl. No. 5)

(m) WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT (E/2003/27-Suppl. No. 7)

SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (agenda item 14)

(a) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (A/58/38-Part I; E/2003/27, 59, 69, 93 and 101; A/AC.266/1; A/57/330 and Add.1)

(b) SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (E/2003/26; A/58/61-E/2003/5 and A/58/67-E/2003/49)

Ms. GOICOCHEA ESTENOZ (Cuba), referring to the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2002 (E/2003/55), noted with satisfaction the steps taken by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to strengthen inter-agency cooperation so as to guarantee the effective and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the international conferences. More emphasis should be placed, however, on activities to ensure that the developed countries met their commitments in terms of official development assistance (ODA). The report, in fact, focused exclusively on national activities and neglected the obligations and responsibilities of donors.

CEB should encourage genuine coordination within the United Nations system to complement national development priorities, objectives and strategies. It should also endeavour to promote real economic and social development as a means of preventing refugee situations and the outbreak of conflicts. Her delegation rejected, however, the contents of paragraph 37 of the report with its simplistic suggestion that refugee situations could become a breeding ground for terrorism. That approach could lead to changes in the refugee protection system. Her delegation welcomed the plans to launch an inter-agency initiative on trade facilitation and recognized the efforts made to improve the functioning of CEB and its subsidiary bodies. Nevertheless, much remained to be done. In that connection, her delegation fully supported the recommendations made in paragraphs 578 to 580 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) (A/58/16).

Her delegation had carefully examined the comments of CPC on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005. Its conclusions and recommendations highlighted the increasingly fundamental role it was playing in the consideration of the programmatic aspects of the proposed budget. In view of the fact that, once again, CPC had been unable to make recommendations concerning certain sections of the budget, the Secretariat should take care to avoid such situations and should include elements in the budget only if they had received intergovernmental support.

It was to be hoped that the Secretary-General's proposed budget corresponded fully to the activities to be engaged in during the biennium in question. In that connection, she reiterated her Government's support for the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions 41/213 and 42/211. She noted with concern that less than a quarter of the resources had been earmarked for the priority areas of economic growth and sustainable development, even though any benefits in those areas would have an effect on other priority areas such as peacekeeping and international security. That disproportion would have to be corrected if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed objectives were to be achieved. Certain sections, such as that of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), should receive a higher budget allocation in view of the importance of trade for economic development.

Her delegation welcomed the fact that a debate had been held on improving the working methods and procedures of CPC (chapter VI of the report). It was important that CPC should continue to exercise its functions and contribute to the intergovernmental debate on planning, programming, evaluation and coordination. As part of the process of strengthening CPC, the Council should carry out fully its coordination responsibilities and respond in detail to the recommendations of CPC, rather than simply take note of the report.

Ms. KING (Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that two very significant events had taken place in the previous week. The first had been a panel discussion on the extent to which gender mainstreaming had been implemented in the United Nations system, which had revealed that, although the various agencies were working on different levels, they were making progress in terms of mainstreaming gender into their activities. The second had been the launch of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality's Gender and Trade Task Force to examine the link between gender and trade. A task force on gender issues and the MDGs, headed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, had also been recently established. A task force on gender and water would be operational in the near future.

At its forty-eighth session, the Commission on the Status of Women had focused on women's access to and participation in the media and information and communication technologies and the impact thereof on women. The agreed conclusions would be put forward at the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in December 2003. The outcome of a recent meeting on "Gender and post-conflict restructuring: Lessons learned from Afghanistan", would be used by the Commission at its next session. Another highly relevant theme was that of women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

The report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to, and progress in the implementation of, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/2003/69) revealed the extent to which gender

mainstreaming had been achieved. She welcomed the draft resolution on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/2003/L.24) and the proposal that gender mainstreaming should be one of the two themes to be discussed in the coordination segment of the 2004 substantive session of the Council.

The report of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (E/2003/59) had been introduced in detail at an informal meeting of the Council a few weeks previously. It revealed that INSTRAW had continued its modest work programme and had endeavoured to reflect in its work the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits.

Ms. BORZI (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the acceding countries of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) country of Norway, said that, following the Beijing Conference, the Council had endorsed the strategy of gender mainstreaming by adopting the agreed conclusions on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. It was also significant that 189 Member States had adopted MDG 8 on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

The Union welcomed the Council's decision to establish gender mainstreaming as a regular sub-item on its annual agenda (resolution 2001/41) with the aim of monitoring and evaluating the progress made and appreciated the way in which the Council and its subsidiary bodies had paid specific attention to the advancement of women. Nevertheless, the degree to which gender perspectives were addressed still varied considerably and they were very often neglected. They needed to be considered as a matter of routine in the analysis of issues and the formulation of policies across the system. The high-level round table on institutional capacity-building, held for the first time at the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, provided a valuable example of good practice.

The goal to reduce gender gaps in aspects of life was an enormous task and required appropriate methodologies and policies. Recognizing the important role of all the Council's functional commissions in promoting the advancement of women and gender equality was critical to achieving that goal. The Commission on Human Rights, in particular, should integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of its work.

Although successful approaches to gender mainstreaming had been developed, more should be done to strengthen the incorporation of gender perspectives into policy frameworks. High priority should be attached to monitoring the implementation of existing gender policies and on following up the major United Nations conferences.

Mainstreaming gender perspectives in all policies and programmes was a way to create a safer, better and more equitable world for all. The Union had a long-standing commitment to promoting gender equality. Its framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005) had been developed to capitalize on and give impetus to its work in that field.

The Council should encourage the United Nations system to consider further measures to strengthen the implementation and monitoring of gender mainstreaming within all policies and programmes. It should also encourage the relevant commissions to take additional steps to address and monitor gender aspects within their mandates and to incorporate such aspects in multi-year programmes of work or thematic discussions, should urge the commissions to use the work of the Commission on the Status of Women more systematically and should decide to devote its 2004 coordination segment to a review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of its agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming.

Ms. DE BORBA MACIEL (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), said that the Group attached great importance to the advancement of women and recognized the efforts made in that area by the international community. The Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing +5 Process placed particular emphasis on the research and training for the advancement of women carried out by INSTRAW, the only United Nations organ specializing in that area.

GRULAC had been keenly interested in the revitalization of INSTRAW for a long time and had actively participated in the working group established by the General Assembly to consider the future operation of the Institute. A series of recommendations prepared by the working group to revitalize and strengthen INSTRAW had been adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/175 of 30 December 2002. In response to one of the recommendations, the President of the Council was currently preparing a draft resolution to amend the Statute of the Institute. Her Group fully supported him in his endeavours. She reiterated the concern previously expressed by GRULAC that, seven months after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/175, the director of INSTRAW had not yet been appointed. She urged the Secretary-General to take action and to ensure that the question of gender mainstreaming was incorporated into all the areas of activity and bodies of the United Nations.

Mr. CRUZ (Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of the Central American Group of countries (GRUCA), emphasized the importance of strengthening the mechanisms created by the United Nations system to protect women throughout the world. It was a matter of concern that INSTRAW continued to be weakened by a lack of funding and the absence of a director. Without adequate leadership, the Institute would be unable either to address its funding problems or fulfil its mandate.

The working group established to make recommendations on the future operation of the Institute had recommended that the Council should amend the Statute of INSTRAW. It was hoped that the members of the Council would support the draft resolution relating to that issue that was to be submitted by its President, so that the necessary changes could be made as soon as possible.

Mr. GARCÍA GONZALEZ (El Salvador) said that his delegation endorsed the statements made by the representative of Brazil on behalf of GRULAC and the representative of Nicaragua on behalf of GRUCA. The efforts of his Government in the area of rural development were closely linked to the advancement of women. The broadening of social programmes and the implementation of poverty reduction programmes contributed positively to achieving rural development goals. However, its efforts were meeting with a number of challenges caused by

the international economic situation, in particular the volatility of markets and the international prices of major agricultural exports such as coffee, cotton and sugar cane. His Government urged the developed countries to open their markets and to eliminate agricultural subsidies, so that countries like El Salvador could compete on equal terms.

El Salvador was joining forces with other Central American countries to accelerate and increase the levels of regional integration, not only in order to benefit more effectively from globalization but also as part of a political commitment by its Government to reach higher levels of development.

It was a matter of concern that, despite the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/175, INSTRAW still did not have a director and he urged the Secretary-General to make an effort during that critical phase of its revitalization to adopt the measures necessary to enable it to operate effectively. His delegation fully supported the Council's efforts to amend the Statute of the Institute.

Ms. ROMÁN MALDONADO (Observer for the Dominican Republic) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Brazil on behalf of GRULAC. Following several earlier resolutions calling for the strengthening of INSTRAW, the General Assembly had, in its resolution 57/175 of 30 December 2002, adopted a series of recommendations designed to revitalize the Institute. The President of the Council would submit a draft resolution containing most of the recommendations made by the General Assembly. It would amend the Statute of the Institute and replace the Board of Trustees by an Executive Board, consisting of two representatives of the Member States from each regional group, and one representative of the host country, the Dominican Republic. It was a matter for concern that, in spite of numerous appeals to the Secretary-General, the post of director of the Institute had yet to be filled. Her delegation reiterated its unqualified support for the strengthening of the Institute, and called on the members of the Council to support the draft resolution.

Ms. ALOMATU (Ghana) said that greater efforts should be made to increase the representation of women from developing countries in senior positions in the United Nations. It was especially important to achieve a gender balance in posts relating to conflict resolution and

peace-building, since women played a key role in those areas. Nevertheless, the commitment to enhancing the contribution of women to achieving peace and development should begin at the national level. Her Government had created a Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, with a view to developing a holistic national response.

While the enterprising nature of Ghanaian women was legendary, endemic poverty remained the main obstacle to their development. Consequently, a Women's Development Fund had been established to provide microcredit facilities to women engaged in commercial activities. At the same time, her Government was pursuing various educational and advocacy programmes, designed to change deep-rooted prejudices against women. In particular, such programmes focused on rape, discrimination in education and career appointments, and the creation of equal opportunities.

Ms. DEMPSTER (Observer for New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that good progress had been made in the system-wide mainstreaming of gender perspectives over the past year. In particular, she welcomed the establishment of a gender adviser post in the Best Practices Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, even though it might have been given a higher classification. She congratulated the Department of Disarmament Affairs on having launched a gender action plan, and the Commission on Sustainable Development on having identified gender as a cross-cutting issue for its future work.

However, the application of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) had been inconsistent, since only 15 per cent of the reports submitted to the Security Council in 2002 had contained any reference to gender. It was unclear whether the two most recent Security Council missions, to West Africa and the Great Lakes, respectively, had either included gender advisers or held meetings to consider gender issues. Such missions should systematically devote at least part of their report to gender issues, and issue specific recommendations on the situation of women and girls.

It was one thing for Member States to include a gender perspective in the documents they negotiated at the United Nations, and quite another for those documents to be converted into action on the ground. While United Nations agencies and departments were expected to use their initiative in gender mainstreaming, they also required specific guidance on how to

implement the various recommendations issued by Member States. A comprehensive review of the system-wide implementation of gender mainstreaming, during the Council's 2004 coordination segment, would be a useful opportunity to provide such guidance.

Mr. OYARCE (Chile) said that the Council should ensure that United Nations agencies paid special attention to the role of women in peace-building and reconstruction operations, trade and development and, especially, rural development. The Council also had the crucial task of coordinating the follow-up to the Durban Conference, with particular emphasis on the compound discrimination suffered by women.

Mr. OWADE (Kenya) said that inequalities between women and men continued to exist for deep-rooted cultural and historical reasons. In his own country, over 80 per cent of women lived in rural areas and many of them were employed as casual or seasonal workers in the agricultural sector, with minimal job security and employment benefits. Only a third of employees in the formal economy, and a similar proportion of students in the institutions of higher education, were women.

The greatest challenges facing his country were the reduction of poverty and the achievement of sustainable economic development. Consequently, his Government had adopted a national poverty eradication plan together with an economic recovery strategy for wealth and employment creation. Its development strategies recognized the vital role of women as effective agents of change, and had targeted female-headed households, especially in rural areas.

Parliament had recently approved the creation of a National Gender and Development Commission, to serve as an advisory body to the Government on gender mainstreaming. In the past year, it had also adopted a new Children's Act, and introduced free and compulsory primary education. He expressed appreciation for the technical and financial assistance received from the development partners with regard to gender mainstreaming, and called for a renewed engagement in that regard.

Draft resolution on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/2003/L.24)

Ms. GORELY (Australia), introducing the draft resolution, said that it called upon all Member States and other actors in the United Nations system to continue to mainstream a gender perspective into activities at all levels, encouraged the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women to maintain their efforts to raise awareness of gender issues across the United Nations system, and committed the Council to devoting one of the two themes of its coordination segment in 2004 to a review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of its agreed conclusions on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system.

Draft resolution on the Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS) (E/2003/L.25/Rev.1)

Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal), introducing the draft resolution, said that its sponsors had been joined by the representatives of Benin, Congo, Ethiopia, Germany, Greece, Jamaica, Netherlands, Nigeria, Portugal, Sweden, Uganda, United Kingdom and United States of America and the observers for Austria, Belgium, Canada, Monaco, Morocco, Spain, Turkey and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. SIV (United States of America) said that the thirty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development had focused on education as a means of empowerment. Regrettably, more than 120 million children throughout the world were still deprived of schooling, while two thirds of the world's 850 million illiterate persons were women. A mother's level of education was the single most important determinant of child survival and education. With a view to improving women's socio-economic development, his Government had provided $232.5 million in 2002 for enhancing education systems, especially for girls. The International Conference on Population and Development had set the target of achieving universal access to education by 2015, and eliminating the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005. His Government was assisting many countries in their attempts to achieve those objectives.

Mr. ZHEGLOV (Russian Federation) said that recent international conferences and summits had defined key parameters of international cooperation in the social and economic sphere. For his Government, the challenges mapped out in the Millennium Declaration were important signposts for the formulation of social policy. The fight against poverty was a central concern of his Government, which believed that the most effective way to tackle poverty was to combine the efforts of Governments, socially responsible business people and civil society. It was not enough for the State simply to dole out money to the poor; it must pursue a sophisticated incomes and employment policy.

His Government supported the work of the Commission for Social Development as a focal point for the issues of ageing, equal opportunities for the disabled, support for youth and strengthening the role of the family. International cooperation should be used to improve the social situation in specific countries by channelling assistance towards target groups through market mechanisms operating in the field of social welfare. At the same time, it was essential that social problems should never be politicized.

The outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly were important international milestones for the advancement of women, and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women had an invaluable role to play as a focal point. His delegation was concerned, however, about certain recent trends in the Commission's work, in particular the overt desire of certain States to exploit women's issues to advance their own political agendas. As in previous years, the latest session of the Commission had overrun its allotted time; moreover, in the extra time allocated, it had been unable even to formulate a common position on one of the crucial themes before it, that of violence against women.

His Government had also observed that the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights duplicated each other's work on the issue of massive and systematic violations of human rights. More specifically, the passing of confidential information received under the 1503 procedure from the Commission on Human Rights to the Commission on the Status of Women was illegal and should be discontinued.

Mr. MALEMPRE (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that his organization was playing a key role in the follow-up to the Copenhagen Programme of Action on Social Development and the Geneva Outcome Document. In response to paragraph 25 of that Document, UNESCO had designed a long-term poverty eradication strategy, based on an integrated approach to development. Pursuant to paragraph 92, it had given special priority to the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All.

It had also assumed the role of coordinator for the United Nations Literacy Decade 2003-2012, which should be seen as an important component for the achievements of the MDGs. Many of the activities carried out by UNESCO, such as its Management of Social Transformations Programme, were designed to assist social scientists in providing more adequate responses to societal issues of high complexity. The organization was also an active contributor to the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society.

Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its thirty-sixth session (E/2003/25)

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I of the report contained a draft decision recommended for adoption by the Council entitled "Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its thirty-sixth session and provisional agenda for the thirty-seventh session of the Commission". She took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft decision.

It was so decided.

Report of the Commission for Social Development on its forty-first session (E/2003/26)

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I, section A, of the report contained a draft resolution entitled "Preparation for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004", which was recommended for adoption by the General Assembly through the Council. She took it that the Council wished to approve that draft resolution and recommend it to the General Assembly for adoption.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I, section B, of the report contained a draft resolution for adoption by the Council (draft resolution I) entitled "Policies and programmes involving youth". She took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft resolution.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I, section B, of the report contained a draft resolution for adoption by the Council (draft resolution II) entitled "Comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities". She took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft resolution.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I, section B, of the report contained a draft resolution for adoption by the Council (draft resolution III) entitled "National and international cooperation for social development: implementation of the social objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development". She took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft resolution.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I, section B, of the report contained a draft resolution for adoption by the Council (draft resolution IV) entitled "Modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002". She took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft resolution.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I, section B, of the report contained a draft resolution for adoption by the Council (draft resolution V) entitled "Agreed conclusions on national and international cooperation for social development". She took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft resolution.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I, section C, of the report contained a draft decision for adoption by the Council entitled "Report of the Commission for Social Development on its forty-first session and provisional agenda and documentation for the forty-second session of the Commission". She took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft decision.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I, section D, of the report contained a decision entitled "Nomination of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development". She took it that the Council wished to confirm the candidates listed in that decision for membership of the Board.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.